

SEP 3, 2010 by [Kay Mathews](#)

## Will Joe 'The Phantom of the Fox Theatre' Patten have to go?



Atlanta, GA - Fans of Joe Patten, the "Phantom of the Fox," are voicing their support for this beloved 83-year-old who has lived in an apartment in the Fox Theatre for more than 30 years and is now facing a new lease that may force him to move.

According to [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), Joe Patten not only saved the Fox's pipe organ in 1963 but also saved the theatre itself. Twice.

In 1974, when Patten became the Fox's Technical Director, he helped to form a nonprofit called Atlanta Landmarks "to oversee the Fox, which was in line to be demolished to make way for the former Southern Bell." Patten is also credited with saving the theatre a second time "after a [fire](#) broke out in 1996 and he led firefighters to the flames."

On Aug. 30, the same board that Patten helped to establish in 1974 voted to terminate his lease that has been in effect since Dec. 28, 1979. The signed lease states that Patten can live rent-free in the 3,640-square-foot apartment that he built inside the [Fox Theatre](#) for the rest of his life.

During a press conference held after a closed Atlanta Landmarks board meeting on Sept. 1, Fox spokeswoman Kristen Delaney was quoted by the AJC as saying:

The thing is with Joe, for the last two years, we've had to make preparations for when he gets older. And so there needed to be some changes made to the lease. He could live there for as long as he's able, but we are not equipped to handle 24-7 elder care. We're a theater, first and foremost.

Nowhere is the public outcry against what is happening to Joe Pattern more prevalent than on a Facebook page dedicated to his cause of living in his apartment until he dies.

The "Save Joe The Phantom of The Fox Theatre" Facebook [page](#) was created on Aug. 26 and nine days later the page has almost 3,900 fans. In fact, within a twenty-four-hour period between Sept. 3 and Sept. 4, more than 600 people became fans of the page.

Folks are shouting "LET JOE STAY!" and expressing their thoughts about and outrage over what is happening to Joe Patten. Some comments are directed at the Atlanta Landmarks board, such as:

*A promise is a promise. No good will come out of breaking this contract. Let him live his life in his home and allow caretakers to come in and out as needed. There will be a massive boycott of The Fox by compassionate people if he is not allowed to stay.*

*Dear Atlanta Landmarks: Everyone in this city dearly LOVES the Fox. Yet, everyone in this city is willing to GIVE UP the Fox in favor of a dear human being. What does that tell you? Is this in the best interests of the Fox? You are NOT being "good stewards" of the Fox.*

*Your reprehensible actions have caused a number of patrons of the FOX to cancel our regular season tickets.*

One post was a personal recollection of what "The Phantom of the Fox" had done for the theatre. A man posted the following: "I was the Captain on Engine 15 the night Joe ran out and 'pulled the box' calling for the fire department. Standing in the street with his night clothes flapping in the wind, he indeed looked like a Phantom. Had it not been for this man there would be no Fox Theater."

Others suggest to Atlanta Landmarks that they should reassess their decision and allow Patten to live out his remaining years in his home. And, it appears that this appeal to Atlanta Landmarks and Fox Theatre is taking hold.

During an interview with [AJC](#) on Sept. 2, Fox Theatre general manager Allan Vella said, "There is no immediate need for that unit, for that apartment. It's not really the pressing issue that I think [the letter] appears to indicate, and I think that was kind of really a misstep on its part."

As one fan of Joe Patten wrote on the Facebook page, "Quite frankly he couldn't be any more precious."

Will Joe "The Phantom of the Fox Theatre" Patten have to go? If Atlanta Landmarks and Fox Theatre management really listen to the people of Atlanta, and now supporters from around the world, they will realize how "precious" Joe Patten is and the answer to that question will be "no."